

Steel 751

Chapter 751 Another Gifted Heir

Field Marshal Heimerich von Graz stood across from the Kaiser in the Imperial Palace. The two men were currently within Berengar's study discussing a matter of great importance, one that was of the utmost secrecy. Heimerich was the older brother of the Empress Adela, and had served as the Field Marshal of Berengar's Royal Guard for several years.

What was initially a small unit of elite troops designed to protect Berengar from threats had expanded over the years into an Army of its own. By now, an entire corps existed within the ranks of the Reichsgarde, also known as the Imperial Guard. While the Imperial German Army was the Nation's premier land based defense force whose loyalty was to the German Empire, the Reichsgarde existed as the personal armed force of the Kaiser and, by extension, the von Kufstein dynasty.

Those who joined the ranks of the Reichsgarde were the elite among the elite when it came to German Soldiers. They had to meet many physical requirements, such as a height of at least six feet tall, as well as 20/20 vision. These men were fiercely loyal to the Kaiser, and were not afraid to follow any order given, no matter how cruel and inhumane it may be.

Heimerich was the leader of the Reichsgarde, second only to the Kaiser in terms of authority. He had been busy these last few years leading the unit in its operations around the globe, mostly in Colonial conflicts. With the war of Iberia entering a new stage, Berengar felt it was best to deploy the Reichsgarde to the region to thoroughly put down the resistance against his rule. Thus, he had a stoic expression on his face as he began to speak to his younger cousin.

"Field Marshal, I have summoned you here today because, as you may be aware, the rebellion in Iberia has gotten out of hand. Adelbrand has failed to quell the unrest, and because of that, I have decided to deploy you to the Iberian theatre so that you may undertake the necessary actions to put an end to this insanity.

What I'm about to order you to do will be an act of extreme cruelty, tens of thousands of innocent people will die, but this endeavor needs to be undertaken to prove to the Papacy and the Catholic church as a whole that resistance against my rule will not be tolerated."

Heimerich nodded his head in the affirmative to the words the Kaiser had spoken before uttering his agreement to the orders.

"Just tell me what it is I need to do, and my men will do as they are told. You do not have to question the loyalty of the Reichsgarde. The orders of the Kaiser are absolute!"

Berengar smiled cruelly when he heard these words before nodding his head thrice. After doing so, he issued his orders to the young Field Marshal.

"As you already know, the use of chemical weapons in South Africa has proven to be an efficient means of annihilating the enemy. As we speak, our facilities are manufacturing a vast stockpile of such weapons. It will be a matter of months before we have enough stored to conduct the operation I have in mind. However, your orders are to use these chemical weapons to gas the city of Madrid into submission.

Once the city's inhabitants are dead, and the gas has cleared, you are to take it and use the city as a base of operations for your men as they sweep through the Iberian Peninsula and wipe out any resistance left standing.

Make no mistake, our propaganda network will use this attack as a threat against those who still choose to rebel. Resist, and your city shall be annihilated. That is the message that will be delivered. The Catholics have gone too far this time, and it is time we put an end to their petty rebellion."

Heimerich immediately saluted the Kaiser in the fashion that was so common among the German Military, before uttering his acceptance of the orders he was given.

"Yes, my Kaiser!"

Berengar returned the Salute before issuing further orders to the man.

"While we wait for the chemical weapons to be manufactured, you are to go into the areas of Iberia that have the most heavy fighting, and wipe out the villages that show the most resistance. I would like to see how long the people of Iberia continue to support the rebels when they pay for it with the price of their lives."

Heimerich nodded his head once more before responding to these orders.

"I swear, I will do everything in my power to eliminate the rebellion. From the Pyrenees to the Atlantic, I shall use any means necessary to crush the Catholic resistance!"

Berengar smiled and nodded his head before patting the man on the shoulder.

"I have the utmost faith in you, my dear cousin. If Adelbrand gives you any trouble, simply inform him you are the representative of the Kaiser's will, and it is not his place to impede you onslaught. It has become clear to me that the man's regard for the lives of civilians has dragged this war on longer than it should have naturally transpired. The Catholics will either come to accept my rule, or they shall be eliminated. There is no third option. Now go and prepare yourself for the journey. I have other matters to attend to."

Heimerich saluted the Kaiser once more before leaving his office. As he walked out of the room, he came across his younger sister, Adela, who stood in the doorway. He smiled and greeted the woman as he passed her by.

"Your Majesty, it is good to see you... It has been a while since our last encounter."

Adela immediately puffed up her cheeks into a pout as she scolded her older brother for being so formal.

"Heimerich, I'm your sister. You don't have to speak such pleasantries with me. Why is it you are always so polite around me?"

Heimerich was slightly surprised when he heard this from his sister before responding to it.

"My sincere apologies, your majesty, but you are the Empress, much like how I have to show respect to the Kaiser despite being my cousin, I, too, must show you the respect you are entitled to. If you will excuse me, I have important matters to attend to. We will have to reacquaint ourselves at a later date."

Adela frowned when she saw her own brother being so polite. If it was her other brother Gerhard, she knew he would not be so formal with her. Then again, Gerhard always was a bit of a sisson. The man had even tried to prevent her betrothal to Berengar once upon a time. Heimerich was not like his brother. He was far more ambitious, and knew who to bow to, and who to step upon.

After seeing her brother off, Adela visited Berengar in his office where the man was hard at work, signing his approval on various documents. She gazed upon the man and his actions for some time before announcing her presence.

"Berengar, do you have a minute?"

Berengar looked up and saw his precious little wife standing in front of him. He immediately smiled upon seeing her, before placing his pen down.

"Adela, my darling, what can I do for you?"

The woman sighed before sitting down in front of Berengar. After doing so, she outlined her reasoning for visiting.

"It's about Kristoffer. The teachers in his class say that our son is a very gifted boy. Maybe not quite as much as Hans, but he appears to be well ahead of the rest of the students. They are talking about advancing him ahead of his peers by a few grades, much like Hans has done."

Berengar looked slightly surprised when he heard this. He tried his best to spend as much time with his children as possible, but with his schedule, and the amount of kids he had, it was difficult. He was unaware that Kristoffer was mentally gifted, like his elder half-brother.

Obviously, it would not be to the same extent, but it would appear that intelligence ran in the family. Perhaps it was his own DNA, and not Linde's, as he had initially suspected because of Hans and Helga's exceptional intelligence. Though the nature of this gift slightly confused Berengar, as his father was not a brilliant man, and prior to his reincarnation, the Berengar of this world was a dullard.

The Kaiser could not wrap his head around it, but decided not to care. He was not a biologist and therefore did not have the means to extensively study his genes and determine whether hyper intelligence was a part of his bloodline, or Linde's. All he knew was that he had two gifted potential heirs, and thus he smiled before nodding his head in approval of the teachers' suggestions..

"Well, if his teachers say it would be best, then I see no reason to hold the boy back. They have my permission to advance him by a few grades."

Adela wore a pretty smile before leaning over the desk and kissing Berengar on the cheek. She blushed slightly as she withdrew her lips and absconded from the room while leaving behind a single phrase.

"You're the best!"

After saying that, Adela swiftly disappeared, leaving Berengar with a smile on his face as he got back to work.

Chapter 752 Dreams of the Past Part IV

Mizuno Ai sat across from a perfectly average young man. If she could say that he had one redeeming physical quality, it was the extent of his muscles. By now, she and Julian had known each other for roughly three months, and today was just a normal Saturday.

Since she had met Julian, Ai had been plagued with troubles in her attempt to coax the man out of his self-imposed exile within the library of Westpoint. She honestly did not understand how the man was able to live his life with as little human interaction as possible. Julian was practically a hermit outside of his studies and the academy's mandated social events.

Both Ai and Julian had an open schedule this weekend, and because of that, she had dragged him out of the library and to an amusement park in the city. It was only now that she was beginning to understand the extent of Julian's social anxiety.

Ai carefully observed the sweat on Julian's brow as he struggled to deal with the large crowds. The man, who was normally calm, collected, and a bit of an asshole, was now pumping his leg frantically as his eyes darted back and forth. He slowly sipped from his milk shake while his gaze was lost in space.

The two of them had stopped for lunch at one of the overpriced restaurants provided in the park. If there were two things that Julian enjoyed in this world, it was cheeseburgers and milkshakes. Of course, he could never afford the prices of amusement park food, and because of that, Ai had paid for his meal, just like she had done with his ticket.

Ai observed the man's unusual behavior as he snacked on his burger and drank from his milkshake. She found his anxiety to be endearing. It was unusual for Julian to show weakness. He normally had a smug attitude when dealing with people, as if he were a god descended from the heavens, and the people around him were mere hairless apes. The fact that he was bad with crowds made him seem more human, but more importantly, it was a weakness that Ai could exploit should the man ever step out of line.

However, she would never admit that she had such cruelty in her mind, instead she wore a convincing facade of a worried friend, as she grasped hold of Julian's shaking hand, and attempted to calm him down.

"Are you alright, Julian? You look a little under the weather..."

Julian was on edge, being surrounded by so many people, and their screams of excitement. He nearly smacked the girl in the face when she touched him without permission. His eyes quickly darted over to Ai's pretty face, as if he were acquiring his target before unleashing his attack. There was a look of genuine concern on her pretty face as she checked on his condition, which helped to calm him down.

Knowing Julian's personality, Ai could surmise that he would respond with a denial of his condition, and instead pretend like he was okay being surrounded by so many people. This would only add to his anxiety, as he would be forced to keep up an act for the entire day. However, in the next moment, Julian sighed and said something unexpected.

"I'm not going to lie... I ain't exactly doing so well right now. People, especially large amounts of people. I find them to be unnerving."

Ai couldn't help but giggle when she saw Julian's pained expression. His response was to glare at the young woman until she stopped, which eventually she did, only to lecture him on his lifestyle.

"Well, that's not surprising. You spend as much time as possible secluded in the library with nothing but books to keep you company. In fact, I don't believe I have ever seen you voluntarily interact with another human being."

There was a look of confusion on Julian's face as he heard this. He did not understand what the girl meant. He could only ask for clarification on the issue.

"Why would I?"

The two friends stared at each other in silence for a moment, as if they were from two different planets. Ai could only sigh and rest her face in the palm of her hands. In that moment, she felt like she was lecturing a child on how to get along with others.

"Because you can't do everything alone in this world. You need people to help you, especially if you're joining the military. If you don't socialize with your unit, they will feel as if they can't trust you with their backs. I'm willing to bet you haven't spoken a word to anyone in the barracks since you first joined the academy, outside of maybe small talk. I'm right, aren't I?"

Julian had to think hard on the last two years to come up with a single instance where he spoke to someone in the barracks outside of mandatory conversation or basic questions. The look on his face as he tried to recall a memory where he spoke with anyone other than in passing made Ai giggle once more. As Julian was lost in his thoughts, a group of girls walked by the table where he sat at. However, when they saw Ai they immediately stopped in their tracks before approaching the woman.

"Ai is that you? I haven't seen you since high school! Is this your boyfriend?"

Ai looked over at the girls and got out of her seat before hugging them. Apparently, they were good friends before starting university. After hearing the question about Julian, the girl blushed, as she did not know how to answer the question. Julian, on the other hand, had not really noticed, nor did he care about the girl's friends. He simply acted aloof, as he normally did. Ultimately, Ai introduced him to the girls with a slight frown on her face, knowing he would not take the initiative to do so himself.

"This is Julian. He's a friend of mine from the academy. Can you believe he has never been to an amusement park before? When I heard this, I knew I had to drag him here myself. He doesn't seem to appreciate my kindness, though!"

The girl that Ai seemed to be the most friendly with immediately felt suspicious when she heard this and began to verbally dissect Ai's statement in front of her.

"A friend, is he? I don't know about you, but I wouldn't normally drag a guy to an amusement park unless I was on a date with him!"

When Julian heard this, he felt embarrassed. He had never even considered the possibility that this was a date, and immediately blushed in the corner as he remained silent. He would allow Ai to clear up the misunderstanding for him. Naturally, Ai defended her statement in an unconvincing attempt.

"D..d..date? No... no... It's not like that. We are just two friends hanging out at an amusement park, right Julian?"

Julian sighed in relief as he heard this. He was right. There was no way a girl like Ai would be interested in him. Thus, he did not feel bad, as he wore a stoic expression while correcting Ai's statement in front of her friends.

"Friends? I would consider us to be more like acquaintances. As for this being a date, it is simply implausible."

Ai shot Julian a nasty glare. She could not understand why he was always like this. How were the two of them not friends? They had known each other for over three months. He had been over to her house and had eaten her cooking, and now they were at an amusement park together. How the hell could they possibly be considered nothing but mere acquaintances?

When the girls noticed Ai's furious gaze directed at Julian after he said they were nothing more than acquaintances, they understood exactly what was going on. The girl who had approached Ai wrapped her arm around the woman's shoulder and whispered something in her ear so that Julian could not hear it.

"Unrequited love is a bitch, isn't it? Though I don't know why you're interested in a guy like this, keep at it. Eventually, he will come around. I mean, it's not like he has a better option than you lying around, now does he?"

Ai immediately blushed when she heard this statement, before staring into her friend's eyes. The girl had a supportive look on her face as she gave Ai a thumbs up. After saying this, the girl spoke to Julian once more.

"Well, it was nice to meet you, Julian. Me and the girls are going to go on ahead. You two enjoy yourselves, and Ai, I'm rooting for you!"

After saying this, the trio of young women ran off towards the amusement park, leaving an embarrassed Ai, and a slightly flustered Julian, to sit in awkward silence as they enjoyed their overpriced burgers and milkshakes. Ai would eventually succeed in coaxing Julian out of his shell and getting him to enjoy himself on some rides together.

Shortly thereafter, Itami awoke from her dream and stared at the ceiling with a depressed expression on her pretty face. She could only sigh in defeat as she thought about what she had dreamt of.

"Julian... you fucking idiot... You probably didn't even realize until the day you died that was supposed to be our first date..."

She turned over on her futon and rested on her side as she attempted to fall back to sleep. However, on this night, Itami would get no further rest, and would lie wide awake until the sun rose, questioning why Julian had never realized her feelings.

Chapter 753 Procuring a Little Brother Part II

Noemi sat within the classroom gazing across from her seat, to the location where the Imperial Prince sat, ardently paying attention to the ongoing lecture. She had a wide grin on her face as she admired the

little boy she had been conditioning to become her little brother. Any minute now, the bell would ring, and lunch time would begin. She had prepared a special meal for the Imperial Prince, hoping that he would enjoy her cooking once more.

Sure enough, the bell rang, and the teacher halted their lecture. The kids gathered into their cliques and began to head to the dining hall. Noemi approached Hans before he could escape from her clutches and smiled before handing over her homemade lunch.

"Hansy, do you want to eat lunch with me? I made your favorite?"

Hans felt unnerved as he heard the pet name that the girl created for him. Since he had begun interacting with the girl, she had become more and more friendly, though he did not mind as she spoiled him dearly, just like how his mother did. Ultimately, he decided to take the girl up on the offer, and the two of them absconded to the Cafeteria where the girl pulled out her meal and handed it over to the boy.

The dish was a homemade buffalo chicken cheese casserole. This was not some high-class meal prepared by an expert chef like Hans was used to eating. Instead, it was a dish popular among commoner households, and because he was never able to taste these things outside of Noemi's influence, he had decided to store away the lunch his mother had prepared for him. Noemi pulled out a portable grill and lit the charcoal on fire, where she heated up the dish in a metal bowl.

While Hans was salivating over the idea of eating Noemi's home-made casserole, someone gazed upon him from the entranceway. As an Imperial Prince, Hans had special privileges, and one of these was out-of-school visitors during lunch period.

Veronika gazed upon the sight of the Hungarian beauty warming up her food for the Prince and glowered. She had come all this way from her prestigious girls' school to visit her little fiancée, and share a meal with him, and yet some harlot had gotten her clutches into him while she was away.

Why didn't Hans ever mention this girl to her? Who was she, and how did she get to know Hans? What were her plans? These were all thoughts that were going through Veronika's head as she watched the two of them chat with cheerful smiles. Hans was smiling? Why did he never do that around her? Veronika ultimately lost her cool when she saw the busty redheaded bimbo feed the boy with her spoon. She gazed upon the sight and dropped her lunch box, which clanged loudly on the floor.

"Come here Hansy, let big sister feed you! Open wide!"

Before Hans could accept the spoonful of casserole, Veronika's arm latched firmly onto Noemi's hand, preventing her from feeding the boy. There was a furious glare coming from Veronika's heterochromatic eyes as she scolded the Hungarian beauty for enticing her fiancée.

"Hansy? Why are you calling my Hans such a childish nickname?"

Noemi shivered when he saw the enraged Veronika. She knew the boy had fiancées as she had heard the rumors, but she never expected one of them to invade her school and catch her in the act. She forced a pretty smile on her face as she tried to greet the girl standing in front of her, but Veronika was not having it.

"You must be Veronika. I have heard so much about you from Hansy-"

Before the girl could finish her sentence, Veronika slapped her violently across the cheek, leaving a red handprint. Noemi gazed in shock at the Bohemian Princess as she underwent another scolding.

"You harlot! Who told you that you could approach the Imperial Prince? Do you think you are worthy? Hans, I don't want you talking to this girl anymore! Come with me. We have lunch to enjoy!"

Veronika grabbed hold of Hans' forearm and tried to leave him away when the little brat slapped her across the face. Startling the Bohemian Princess and everyone else in the cafeteria who gazed upon the drama from this little love triangle. Veronika could not believe that Hans had just struck her, and instantly fell back in fear.

"Hans wh-"

Tears streamed down her eyes as she tried to ask why Hans was being so cruel to her, but the vicious gaze in the boy's eyes which accompanied his verbal thrashing laid out the reason before she could even ask the question.

"You dare tell me who I can and cannot associate with? Who do you think you are? I am Prince Hans von Kufstein and heir to the German Empire, yet you think that just because you are my fiancée that you have control over me? Veronika, I think you have overstayed your welcome. Go back to your all-girls' school before I get angry."

After saying this, the boy did not spare Veronika a second glance, and instead checked on Noemi's condition. His following words dug a hole in Veronika's heart, causing her to flee while in tears.

"Big sis Noemi, are you alright? I hope that girl did not cause you any harm!"

The last thing Veronika saw before she sprinted from the school was Noemi stuffing the boy into her bosom and stroking his hair with a wicked grin on her face.

"Oh my sweet little Hansy, it's not your fault. It's only natural for the little bitch to be jealous of our relationship!"

Having said this, the two of them continued their meal, while Veronika was forced to flee the scene in shame.

It did not take long for news of this incident to reach Linde's ears. After all, she had several eyes watching her children at all times. When she learned of this incident, she immediately halted her work regarding national intelligence. Instead of handling crucial matters of state, she proceeded to acquire all the information she could on the young Hungarian beauty named Noemi.

Linde stared at the report in her hands with a frown on her face. Pictures did not exist yet, and because of that, she could only read the description of the teenage girl, which enraged the overprotective mother. Long red hair, violet eyes, and most importantly, a developed figure, despite her young age.

This, combined with the reports of Noemi forcing the prince to call her big sister, made it clear to Linde that the girl was just a cheap knockoff of herself. The idea that her precious baby boy was falling into the clutches of a young Hungarian vixen filled Linde with rage and jealousy.

Hans was still a young boy who needed his mommy, so why was he pursuing a younger version of herself so soon? He was only supposed to do that when he was older. This could not stand. Linde had no choice but to have a face-to-face meeting with this girl and see just what her plans were for her precious baby boy.

Currently, Linde was at her office in the headquarters of Imperial Intelligence. After reading this report and coming to a decision, she had burst out of the room, looking for one particular person. Soon she found a young blonde woman who was her secretary. This woman was brewing a cup of coffee, which Linde immediately halted as she gave her another order.

"I want you to find this Vászoly Noemi, and invite the little bitch to the palace. I expect to meet with her shortly."

The secretary could tell there was a hint of hostility in Linde's sky-blue eyes, and immediately gulped the saliva that was pooled in her throat. There was nothing more fearsome to the members of Imperial Intelligence than the Director when she was angry. Especially if that anger was directed towards someone who had targeted her family. Upon seeing the woman pause in fright, Linde glared at her fiercely before questioning why she was still silent.

"What are you just standing there for? Get to it already!"

The woman quickly placed down the pitcher of coffee and saluted Linde before scurrying off to fulfil the task she had been given. Hans was entirely unaware that the little incident with Veronika and Noemi had found its way to his mother's ears before the school day was even over.

Thus, it was quite a shock when an agent of Imperial Intelligence approached Noemi after class and invited her to his house. It was in that moment he knew that he had fucked up. There was only one reason his mother would know about Noemi, and that was because he had made a scene.

Hans dreaded the idea of what his mother might do to him when she learned out about his illicit relationship with a foreign girl. Thus, while being led back to the palace by members of Imperial Intelligence, Hans and Noemi were both shivering in fear.

Chapter 754 Procuring a Little Brother Part III

Linde sat on a love seat with one leg crossed over the other. She wore a pretty smile on her exquisite face while the white gold and sky blue topaz jewelry she was wearing glistened under the light of the sun that flowed through the nearby windows. She had gone all out on her appearance for this meeting with the young Hungarian harlot who was pursuing her seven-year-old son.

Even Noemi was impressed by the woman's stunning appearance while she sipped on a teacup filled with coffee. Though the girl was shivering in fear of what might happen to her. A squad of guards who belonged to Imperial Intelligence escorted her to the palace, and by the looks of the woman sitting across from her, this was an interrogation. Linde could tell the teenage girl was intimidated by her presence, causing her to smile as she lectured the girl about everything she knew.

"Vászoly Noemi, age thirteen, date of birth July 2nd, 1412. Born in the neighboring Kingdom of Hungary to a major noble family, you immigrated to Germany less than a year ago after your family suffered from

economic setbacks caused by the Catholic World's economic sanctions. You have one deceased older sister, and a living older brother who is the heir to your family's lands.

Currently, you are being taken care of by a servant of your family named Dudás Lilla, who is currently the mistress of a young German Officer in the Border Guard. You live in the city of Kufstein with a sizeable allowance from your family and attend the Royal Kufstein Academy as part of the gifted program.

Roughly half a year ago, you first contacted my son. At first I thought you were just a friend that my little Hans has made, but today you made a scene by sparking conflict with Princess Veronika. Because of that, I am convinced you have ulterior motives towards my son. So how about you spill your intentions before I resort to some more forceful methods to learn the truth..."

Noemi's skeleton nearly jumped out of her skin when she heard the beautiful redheaded woman across from her accurately state so much information about her life. When those furious sky-blue eyes cast their gaze upon her, the inexperienced girl immediately blurted out her reasoning for approaching Hans.

"I've always wanted a little brother!"

Linde and Hans gazed upon the teenage girl with suspicion and confusion when she said these words, with Linde interrogating her further.

"What do you mean by that?"

Though she looked calm, the director of intelligence was gripping the hand rests of her sofa intensely. If she had a bit more strength in her hands, she might possibly be capable of snapping them in two. This did not go unnoticed by both Hans and Noemi, causing the girl to take a deep breath before speaking of her intentions in a way that made sense.

"I'm the youngest in my siblings, with an older sister and brother. The two of them spoiled me when I was a kid, so much so that I've always wanted a little sibling of my own to share the love I received. Specifically, a little brother. When I first saw Hans, he was like the spitting image of what I always envisioned for a little brother.

He was so cute, and too smart for his own good. So I watched him for several weeks, trying to figure out the best way to talk to him. I noticed that he always finished the food that was prepared for him with a happy smile on his face, except on Thursdays, where he had a particular casserole that he never seemed to finish.

Because of this, I made him a tuna sandwich and gave it to him, knowing that he would be interested in eating it, instead of what was prepared for him that day. Since then I have maintained a friendly relationship with the Prince so that he thinks of me as a big sister..."

Hans was not an idiot. He had guessed the girl's intentions since the first time he met her. Despite knowing her schemes, the fact remained that he enjoyed being spoiled by beautiful older women with big boobs, and though Veronika was young, she was more developed than the other girls in his class. Thus, he tolerated her shenanigans, not thinking anything of it.

However, when he heard the girl confess to the fact that he was throwing away his mother's lunches on Thursdays, the young Prince stiffened in terror. The ever watching gaze of his mother's sky-blue eyes

peered into his soul as she wore a pretty smile on her face. However, Hans knew that behind this smile was the black heart of a woman scorned. Thus, it was no surprise when she addressed this point.

"Hans... Is what this girl says true? Are you throwing away my lunches and eating her cooking instead?"

Hans lowered his head, in fear of looking upon Linde's vicious gaze. Noemi noticed this and could tell something was wrong with this situation. She could only look upon the boy and apologize by silently mouthing the words.

"I'm sorry..."

Hans remained silent, which only cause Linde to become more furious.

"Hans, you answer me this instant!"

Upon hearing the woman's voice raise, he nearly jumped out of his seat and quickly sang like a canary.

"Yes, mommy..."

Hans tensed up and shut his eyes in fear of what his mother might do to him. However, the unexpected happened. Her furious gaze lightened, and she grabbed hold of her son and sat him in her lap while clutching his head to her bosom, all while speaking to him in a caring tone.

"Hans, you should have told me if you didn't enjoy that dish, I would have gladly prepared you another in its place! I'm not a mind reader, you silly boy. You must tell mommy when you don't like a meal..."

Hans gazed up at his mother's beautiful face and sighed in relief. He thought for sure he was going to be in trouble when this secret of his was revealed. However, in the next moment, the woman's voice turned ice cold as she gazed over at Noemi, who looked upon the scene of confusion.

"As for you, you will apologize to my daughter-in-law for causing a scene, and then you will never speak to my little Hans again. If I find out you are approaching him after today, I will have you transferred to another school. Do I make myself clear?"

Hans was about to protest when Linde shot him a fierce gaze and pressed her finger to his lips before scolding him on his errant behavior.

"Don't think you are off the hook just yet, young man. You are way too young to be spoiled by a woman other than your mother. I am going to make sure you sit in your room and think about what you have done before you I allow you out of my sight again!"

Noemi was sitting in silence with a downcast expression. She had really enjoyed her time with Hans, but if the Empress of Germany was giving her a command, then she had no choice but to submit. Who was she? She was an immigrant girl, and if she kept pursuing Hans in his family's territory, Linde could make her life extremely difficult. The young Hungarian beauty could only sigh in defeat as she wiped the tears from her eyes and agreed to Linde's orders.

"Alright, I understand. I won't approach Hans anymore... I'm sorry for the mess I have caused... Goodbye, Hans."

After saying this, the girl was escorted from the room. Where Hans began to puff his cheeks in consternation. He pouted towards his mother, who stroked his strawberry blonde hair in an attempt to calm his inner fury.

"Oh, Hans, you are only seven years old. There will be plenty of time for other women to spoil you. Just let mommy have this while you are still young and adorable. You also need to apologize to Veronika. It is never acceptable to strike a lady!"

Hans refused to look into his mother's eyes and thus averted his gaze as he muttered under his, brought about his disagreement with the woman's last statement.

"That's not what father says..."

Apparently, Linde heard the boy's remark and glared at him before speaking her thoughts aloud.

"Your father is an ass."

Linde was being a bit of a hypocrite, as she was a masochist who loved being punished by her "master". However, she could not easily tell her young son that it was okay to be rough with a woman when she consented to it. That was a conversation he was way too young to have. Hans, however, stared in awe at his mother before questioning what the woman had just said.

"I thought you loved father?"

In response to this question, Linde gazed upon her son with confusion in her sky-blue eyes. What did she say that implied she did not love Berengar? She quickly clarified her stance so that the boy wouldn't have any confusion about his parents' relationship.

"I love your father more than anything, but that doesn't change the fact that he's an ass. I just happen to find that aspect of his personality attractive..."

Hans gave his mother a strange look before commenting on her personality.

"You're weird..."

Linde simply smiled and patted the boy's hair before responding to this statement.

"And you're my son, so do as I say and apologize to your little fiancée, or I will confine you to your room for a month"

The Prince pouted once more, as he tried to object to his mother's orders.

"But father says-"

Linde's fierce gaze pierced through Hans's soul as she spoke in a stern voice, silencing him before he could finish his thought.

"I don't care what your father says, you will do what I say!"

Hans could only lower his head in defeat and agree to his mother's request. Perhaps if Berengar was here at this moment, he would convince Linde that the boy shouldn't apologize. After all, what he said was true for the most part.

However, when the Kaiser was busy with work, Linde's rule was absolute as far as household affairs were concerned. Thus, Hans could only approach Veronika and apologize for what he had said, even if he didn't mean it.

Chapter 755 Introduction of Film and the World's First Photograph

Berengar stood in the Kufstein Chemistry Department's main lab, where Aldo von Passau and his team of chemists were eager to introduce their latest invention to the Kaiser. He had been dragged from his home to this building to witness the newest invention. Or should he say prototype to the newest invention.

As chemists, Aldo von Passau and his team received almost limitless funding in the pursuit of their scholarly objectives. Some of them focused on medicine, while others focused on military products, and others yet pursued their own brilliant ideas.

There were currently two new inventions sitting on a table in the lab. Berengar recognized them immediately and was surprised that they had been developed. One was a roll of film, and the other was a primitive box camera that utilized the aforementioned film to take pictures.

Though Berengar immediately recognized the devices, he feigned ignorance. It was best not to act like he knew everything that these men invented. After all, he did not want to start an investigation into the origins of this knowledge.

"This is it? These are the new inventions? What are they?"

Aldo von Passau wore a pleasant smile as he introduced the concept to Berengar.

"This is something we have been experimenting with for a while. The idea came to me, when a friend of mine who is a rather lazy artist asked what if we could capture a moment in time into a single picture, without the need for paintings?"

Together with the work of my colleagues in both the Chemistry Department, and a few friends of mine who understand engineering. We came up with this that you see here!"

The result was a roll of film that appeared fairly modern. Berengar picked it up and gazed into it for a few moments before asking for an explanation of the process used to make it.

"How did you make this?"

Aldo had a prideful smirk on his face as he announced the means he used to create the film.

"We started with a mixture of silver and chlorine, which created a compound called silver chloride. After much experimentation, we found out that this chemical is sensitive to light, and thus after crystalizing it, we experimented on ways to make use of it. Eventually, we settled on a mixture of the silver chloride crystals with gelatin that we applied to a celluloid substrate.

We have attempted many chemical combinations, but this is the best result we have had. In the end, an engineering friend of mine put together this other device to make use of it. We were just about to try it out, and I figured you would want to be in the world's first picture."

Berengar gazed at the Camera and noticed it was a basic box camera. A box camera made use of a cardboard or plastic box with a convex-concave lens on one side, and the film on the other. With the press of a button, it could take a still photograph. Berengar was pleased that these men wanted to include him in their experiments, especially since it looked like they may actually have a working product.

Thus, while dressed in his Imperial Regalia, Berengar put on a smile as he stood side by side with the team of chemists and a few engineers. These men stood next to a table that held a roll of film and another box camera prototype. A member of the Chemistry department, who did not take part in either endeavors, held the device in his hand, after being carefully instructed on its use.

When everyone was in position, he pressed the button, and with a large flash, the photo was taken. Though it would take some effort to develop the negative into a proper photograph, the scientists were certain that they had taken the world's first photograph. Berengar was pleasantly surprised with this visit, and immediately questioned Aldo about the feasibility of large-scale production.

"Aldo, how long will it take you to find out the results of this? Better yet, how long before we can begin the manufacture of these box cameras and film?"

Aldo could tell Berengar was over eager, which was strange for a man who usually got excited by military hardware, and not simple products like this. After the development of chemical weapons, that made the man ashamed to call himself a chemist, Aldo could not help but question Berengar's intentions.

"Why do you ask?"

Berengar was not afraid to reveal the plans he had in store for these photographs. Though he was unaware of Aldo's reservations about chemical developments in warfare, he was happy to explain the practical purposes of cameras.

"I just had a brilliant idea. We could employ these devices in the fields of intelligence, government documentation, and propaganda. Can you imagine it? Say one of our agents is in the field, deep behind enemy lines, and they find evidence of an enemy conspiracy. They could take photos of these documents, and send them back home where a proper counter measure can be taken place.

Then there's the Department of Propaganda. We could take photos of major events, and display them in the national papers. The people could see with their own eyes the greatness of our country, other than just reading about it.

Then there are the purposes of government identification. For example, in immigration, it would be best to have a proper ID card with one's photo, so that we can determine whether the holder is lying about their residency status.

There are limitless applications of this technology, and perhaps we might one day be able to develop the means to not just document a single instant in time, but the passing of time itself! Think about it Aldo, you and your team have just changed the way the world will work!"

It shocked Aldo to see how far Berengar had thought ahead with the use of this newest invention. It had only been a few moments since Berengar witnessed its use, and yet he already thought of so many ways

to use it for the good of society. Documentation, intelligence, and propaganda could all benefit from the device. In fact, these fields would be so affected, that the people working in them would have to rethink how to approach their jobs.

Unlike chlorine gas, this invention could be used to help the Empire in more than simple killing effect. He was pleased that he could redeem himself with a useful invention after being the lead designer on the chemical weapons project. Thus, he thought about it for a bit before speaking his opinion on how long it would take to get these devices into the hands of those who needed them.

"We can begin production in three to six months. After that, I suppose it will take some time before we are able to produce enough of these devices to be used efficiently by the different government departments who require them. However, within the next couple of years, they should see common use throughout the Reich."

Berengar was pleased when he heard this, and nodded his head with an emphatic smile on his face.

"Good, very good. Well, I will leave you to your work Doctor. Make sure not to disappoint me. I look forward to the days when my agents can have these employed in the field."

After saying this, Berengar departed from the Kufstein Chemistry Department and returned to the palace. He had many plans for these devices, and was happy that the subordinates beneath him were progressing in the knowledge of their fields.

Berengar had given the German people the means to stand ahead of the rest of the world. Chemistry, Physics, Biology, Astronomy, Engineering, etc. These were all fields that Berengar had at least basic 21st century undergrad understanding of, and thus educated the people most suited to expand upon them.

In the years since he introduced this knowledge to his people, many of his citizens had become educated, and those with gifted minds had entered and graduated the universities that Berengar founded. From a team of a few dozen chemists, Berengar now had hundreds working for him. Each was more eager than the last to make a major contribution to the world.

He would not be surprised if that in a hundred years, the German Empire of this world had been to the moon. It was an amusing thought to think of. A society with a 19th century mindset, but with 21st century technology existing in the 16th century, while the rest of the world remained in a renaissance environment. Such thoughts brought a smile to the face of the Kaiser as he got back to work, humming a tune from his past life about.

Chapter 756 What Could have Been Part I

Berengar fell back onto his bed with a radiant smile on his face. Lying by his side were two naked women. One was his younger sister, Henrietta, and the other was his cousin Adela. The three of them had just enjoyed some quality time together right before going to bed.

For the past few weeks Adela and Henrietta had been coming to Berengar's bedroom whenever they had a chance, where they drained him dry together. It was a brave new world, and Adela had grown rather close to her younger cousin Henrietta after undergoing Linde's special training.

Berengar's life at home was filled with hedonistic pleasure as he drank, smoked, and slept with five different women every day. Sometimes the girls would approach him together, at other times they were

separate, however most commonly they came at him in pairs. No matter what happened, every night he would feel the warm embrace of at least one beautiful woman by his side. Thus, as his mind entered the darkness, he kissed his two little minxes on the forehead before telling them goodnight.

"Good night, my beautiful girls. I love you both..."

The two women smiled and nuzzled their heads into Berengar's chest as they repeated the words back to him.

"We love you too."

After hearing this, Berengar drifted into sleep. Where, for the first time in a long time, he was thrust into the memories of his past life. As if he was sucked into another world, Berengar internally panicked as he looked around him and realized that he was standing in the rank and file of his class graduation.

In the crowd that had gathered to watch the cadets as they officially entered active duty was another cadet, a young Japanese beauty who smiled and clapped her hands as she gazed upon the man she was secretly in love with while he received his diploma.

Of course, in his past life, Julian had not noticed this affectionate gaze. However, standing here, witnessing this scene once more, Berengar could see very clearly that his old acquaintance Mizuno Ai had feelings for him, which instantly caused his brain to shut down in shock. He simply stood there in disbelief as he tried to work through what was happening to him. This was clearly just a dream, but it was so vivid. It was as if he was reliving the moment with his current memories intact.

He was standing there on stage with a diploma in his hands, but he did not hear a single word that was spoken to him. All he could do was stare back at Ai in disbelief, muttering under his breath his current thoughts.

"Ai had feelings for me? No... that can't be, could it? I have to find out the truth!"

Berengar did not know if this dream would allow him to hear the truth, or if it was simply a work of his mind filling in the gaps, but he had to know the truth. He had spent three out of four of his college years with the woman pestering him. If it was true that she secretly had feelings for him, then he just had to find out.

Thus, after waiting for the ceremony to end, he quickly found Ai in the crowd and darted towards her, completely ignoring his parents, who tried to speak with him before anyone else. It shocked Ai to see Julian greet her first, but she quickly hugged him before congratulating him on getting his diploma.

"Congratulations! I know you have been working hard for this these past three years, and I'm really happy for you. I can't wait until my own graduation next year!"

In his past life, Julian never spoke with Ai at this moment. His parents had monopolized his entire graduation day, he was never been able to hear these words. It was amazing that despite knowing this was a dream; it appeared as if he was given a second chance. He felt intense anxiety in his heart as he gazed upon the woman who was the closest thing to a friend he had in his past life for the first time in close to ten years. Ai could see the troubled look on his face, and immediately pressed her hand against his forehead, checking for a fever while interrogating him with a hint of worry in her voice.

"What's wrong? Are you sick?"

Julian could feel the warmth of the woman's hand. He could hardly believe it, it felt as if this was reality. Yet that was not possible. It had to be a dream. It took him a few moments to react to the girl's question before responding.

"No, Ai, I'm fine, really I am. I'm just a little overwhelmed, is all."

Ai giggled when she heard this before responding to Julian's claim.

"There's a lot of people here, huh? Don't worry, I know you're bad with crowds, so it's not surprising to see you having some difficulty. However, I think you looked great out there!"

Julian chuckled as he heard this before awkwardly shifting the conversation in another direction.

"Hey, Ai, there is something I wanted to ask you. This might sound a little bit crazy, but just bear with me for a moment. Do you, by any chance, have feelings for me?"

These words struggled to register in Ai's brain as she blushed as red as a strawberry. She could not find the words to express her feelings in that moment, and faltered backwards in astonishment. This reaction instantly surprised Julian, causing him to respond in disbelief.

"Holy shit, you do! How long have you felt this way?"

It took Ai a few moments to come back to reality as she struggled to believe that this dense idiot had finally realized the truth. She stumbled over her words as she admitted just how long she had felt this way.

"Um... Well, thinking back, I've liked you ever since my freshman year... I'm sorry... how exactly did you finally realize it? I thought you were as dense as diamonds..."

Julian reached out and grabbed hold of the woman's cheek, which startled her. It felt so real, he could hardly believe it. He felt as if his heart was about to collapse into a black hole as it took him two lives to finally understand this truth. Tears streamed down his eyes as he lamented what a colossal fuckup he was in this life, causing him to sniffle as he deflected the girl's question with a vague statement.

"You wouldn't believe me if I told you... I'm sorry, I just, I never knew..."

Seeing the tears in Julian's eyes caused Ai to cry on her own. It had taken her three years, but she had finally gotten through that thick head of his. She grabbed hold of his hands and reassured him that everything was going to be alright.

"It's okay, so it took you three years to notice my feelings. That doesn't matter, we have so much to look forward to now. You feel the same way, don't you? We can finally be together!"

Julian faltered backwards as he heard these words. If his heart could physically burst, it would have done so at this moment. He could only shake his head as the tears crashed down around him. The act caught the girl off guard, who thought for sure this was their defining moment as a couple. Julian could only say how sorry he was over and over again, as he could not think of anything else to say.

"I'm sorry... I'm so sorry, I'm really sorry Ai... If only I had realized this sooner, but it is too late..."

Ai felt her heart break in that moment as she assertively grasped hold of Julian's hands, and looked him in the eyes. After all these years, he found out the truth and rejected her. What kind of cruel fate was this? She could not help but question his sanity as she heard this.

"What do you mean, it's too late? We're here right now. We finally have a chance to be together, and you're just going to walk away?"

Julian wiped the tears from his eyes and wore a grim expression. It was as if his heart had already decayed and no longer existed, not even as a corpse. The tears had run dry as he uttered the words in his mind.

"I'm sorry Ai, I really am. If I had known sooner, we could have been together, but I'm already dead, and this is just a dream to remind me of what I have lost... I'm sorry, I wish we could have been together... I really do..."

After saying this, Julian walked away, drifting lifelessly over towards his parents, who were waiting for him, leaving the only girl who ever liked him in this life heartbroken and in tears. Berengar awoke from the dream in that moment and stared into the morning light with tears in his eyes. He wished he had never had that dream. Now that he knew the truth, it would weigh in his heart for the rest of his life.

Thus, he gazed over at the two sleeping beauties next to him and sighed heavily before pulling out a bottle of whiskey that he kept in a nearby drawer. He gazed at the half drunken contents of the bottle for a few moments in silence before taking a large swig. There was nothing he could do about the past. He could only live this life to the fullest, from now on.

Chapter 757 A Mysterious Power in the Farwest

Itami sat in her great hall, gazing upon her advisors and the heads of various government sectors. In the months since she had developed the plans for her new naval vessels, she had been doing her best to modernize her armed forces and expand her influence across the realm.

Because she had a smaller army than Berengar, she could arm them with the newest weapons that she had developed much more quickly than he could. Thirty thousand men had sworn their loyalty to the War Goddess, and now she was prepared to strike.

However, before she could launch an invasion of her first target for Imperial expansion, some troubling news came from her trade minister, who laid a device on the table that had come from a merchant who had travelled to the land Itami knew as India.

This device was not a simple arkebuse, instead it was a rifled flintlock musket. How did the Indians get their hands on such devices? Via their trade with the Timurid Empire who, through internal corruption, sold some of the weapons that were meant to go to their troops engaged in the war against the Catholic Church. Itami glared fiercely at the weapon that should not exist in this era and immediately questioned the minister of trade just how he obtained the weapon.

"Kono-san! Where did you get this weapon!?!"

The elderly minister of trade known by the name Kono Masakuni feebly rose from his seat as he expressed what he knew about the rifled musket.

"I received this firearm from one of our Merchants who travelled to the Bengal Empire in the west, where, through contact with their western neighbors, the so called Anangpur Empire obtained this weapon by trade. It appears to be a more advanced form of the Tanegashima that we used to employ in our armies..

Initially, I would say that we should be concerned. However, thanks to the efforts of your majesty, our armies are now equipped with weapons far more advanced than these. Thus, I think we should simply consider the Bengal and Anangpur Empires to be near peers."

Despite the various heads of state agreeing with the Minister of Trade's opinion, Itami was unconvinced. Upon realizing that this weapon came from a foreign country, it instantly struck Itami with an overwhelming sense of panic. She had always believed that she was the only reincarnator in the world, thus giving her an enormous advantage. However, this weapon, that should not exist in the 15th century, was simple proof that somebody else had come to this world with a similar level of knowledge that she had.

She had no choice but to inspect the weapon for clues of its origins. The young woman cautiously picked up the rifle and carefully observed it. From the proof marks to the rifling in the barrel, Itami closely inspected the weapon for any clue of where and when it was manufactured.

The early weapons that Berengar had developed were manufactured with a simple proof mark which was his coat of arms, and a serial number. As time passed, other information was written on them, such as the armory they were manufactured in, the name and model number of the weapon, etc.

This particular rifled musket was a recent manufacture as part of German military aid to the Timurid Empire. Because of that, it had the most modern markings on it, and several improvements over the designs previously issued to the Austrian Army, such as a lighter weight stock.

The three major armories of Germany were currently located in Kufstein, Innsbruck, and Vienna. Kufstein exclusively manufactured arms for the German Army. While Innsbruck manufactured weapons for Germany's allies, and Vienna manufactured the most obsolete weapons for sale to any other potential buyers.

After Dharya and Priya arrived in Kufstein and informed Berengar of their uncle's actions, he cut off trade with the Anangpur Empire and publically announced that the Indian Emperor and his sister were under his protection. Thus, the actions of the Timurid Empire, which allowed this weapon to end up in the hands of the Indians, could be seen as violating German sanctions.

Naturally, Itami was unaware of most of this information. All she could discover from these markings was the model number of the weapon, and when they were initially introduced to service, she could also guess what country they were from based upon the Innsbruck Royal Armory marking. Though she could not read Middle High German, she knew where Innsbruck was and could surmise that someone initially invented these weapons in 1417, retrofitted them in 1418, and they came from Austria.

This meant that a reincarnator had entered this world at least three years before she did, and was located in Austria. Though Europe was a far distance away from Japan, and would not easily interfere with her immediate plans. This reincarnator, whoever he was, had an advantage of entering this world

three whole years prior to herself. Itami could only guess the extent of this reincarnator's Empire, assuming he was as ambitious as she was.

With this in mind, she gazed towards her minister, and questioned his motives. He had said the weapon originated in India, but these markings were clearly an early form of German. Because of this, she interrogated the man for more information on the item.

"Kono-san, you say this weapon comes from India? Are you sure about that? Perhaps it was traded to them by a foreign power?"

The elderly minister raised his brow when he heard this. He did not know how Itami could ascertain the truth about this information, which he had deliberately left out. The old geezer had to admit that he had underestimated this little girl and her knowledge of the world. He could only sigh in defeat and admit the information he knew about the weapon.

"I only know what the merchant has told me. Supposedly, these weapons were manufactured by a mysterious power in the far west. They have sold large quantities to their allies, and some of those weapons ended up being traded further east. Apparently, the Anangpur Empire has very few of these weapons, and makes use of an older weapon design similar to the Tanegashima we previously employed in our army."

Itami struggled to calm her heart. If there was truly someone in this world whose knowledge, experience, and ambitions rivaled her own, it could create serious conflict in the future. It might even lead to her death. She had no choice but to advance her invasion plans. Only by seizing Korea and its vast iron resources could she even hope to contend with this mysterious reincarnator in the west.

"I have changed my mind. Initially, I planned to invade Hokkaido, and then the Ryukyu Kingdoms. However, knowing that there is a mysterious power in the far west capable of producing such weapons has emboldened my resolve.

We will invade Joseon by the year's end! I want all efforts on manufacturing to go towards my warships! I will also enact mandatory conscription for all young men aged sixteen to twenty. They shall serve a minimum of four years in the Imperial Army!"

The various military officers and heads of state gazed upon Itami with shock. They could not fathom why she was so terrified by the existence of this weapon when she herself had introduced more modern firearms. How could they know the fear the girl felt, knowing that there was someone else like her in this world with a three-year advantage over her?

However, Itami's mind was set. She would conquer the Joseon within the next year or two, and then use its iron to fuel her industries. Within five to ten years, she planned to have battleships, bolt action rifles, and machine guns. She would focus her efforts on military advancements, rather than civilian improvements. This was the only way she could compete with this mysterious reincarnator should their armies clash.

Meanwhile, Berengar was blissfully unaware of another reincarnator existing in the world. Though he suspected the possibility, he also believed that if such a person existed, and could rival him on the global stage, they would have shown themselves by now. Thus, he was more focused on improving the lives of his civilians, now that his war technology had practically reached the era of the Great War.

He did not know that thanks to the Timurid, and Anangpur Empires, his existence had been leaked to his greatest potential rival, who would stop at nothing to catch up to him in terms of military might. If the two reincarnators knew each other's true identities, they would likely peacefully negotiate through their differences. However, they didn't know, and as far as they were both concerned, there could only be one reincarnator in this world, so long as there was another, a threat to their Empires would be ever present.

Thus, Itami had begun the long path of war, where she intended to conquer Joseon, Hokkaido, and the Ryukyu Kingdom as soon as possible. Since she had established herself as the Empress, and lorded over the Army, there was nobody who dared to stand against her ambitions. Soon North-East Asia would become embroiled in a series of wars that would spark the rise of a new global power.

Chapter 758 The Domino Effect

Emperor Vetranis Palaiologos sat in the confines of his throne room. Standing before him were his greatest advisors. Strategos Palladius from the Balkans, the first Prince Quintus, and several other military advisors. In recent days, Prince Quintus had unknowingly been influenced by German operatives to seek a peaceful resolution to the conflict in the holy land.

Quintus was a spiteful man, despite his peace-loving appearance. After being outdone by a foreign monarch in his area of expertise, he wanted nothing more to shatter Berengar's peace between the Orthodox and Catholic worlds. To do this, he needed to find a way to establish a peace with the Crusaders, while abandoning the Timurids to continue the fight. Unknowingly, this spiteful nature of his was what allowed him to be played by Berengar like a fiddle.

The Byzantine and Timurid Empire had suffered defeat after defeat since this crusade began. However, recently their losses were monumental, and this was because Berengar secretly began leaking rifling technology and gunpowder to the opposition.

By now the Catholic Church was wielding a mixture of arkebuses, matchlock smoothbore muskets, and matchlock rifled muskets. There was also an increasing supply of drake cannons being introduced; because of this, the enemy of the Byzantine and Timurid Empires had a superior range with their weapons.

Though France's army was broken, and they were forced to withdraw back to their homeland. The remaining Catholic states still supported the Crusade, and gained even further ground, pressing the Byzantine and Timurid forces out of Syria, Palestine, and extending the length of their territory to the borders of Egypt.

Vetranis was practically pulling the hair out of his head as he sought to find a solution to this crisis. He had fought for many years to reconnect the borders of the Eastern Roman Empire to the state they were in during the split of Rome back in 395 AD, and over the course of a year, he had lost Syria-Palestine. This could not stand, and thus he was quick to voice his discontent towards his military advisors.

"How did the Catholics get their hands on rifling technology? More importantly, where are they getting their gunpowder? Does anybody know the answer to this question?"

Palladius, who had the largest spy network in the Byzantine Empire, was quick to voice the conclusions he had come to after investigating these matters.

"Our contacts in German intelligence inform us there was a mole who leaked the technology to the Catholics. He has since been dealt with. As for the gunpowder, we believe it is coming from India and is being transported by the golden horde. So unless you want to open up a northern front into this war, I suggest we accept the circumstances for what they are."

Vetranis had a hard time accepting this news, but all he could really do was sigh in defeat. It was at this moment that Quintus voiced his concerns.

"Father, our forces are depleted, and unless we want to take soldiers from the Balkans, it is unwise to continue fighting this war any further. We need to come to a peaceful solution to this problem. I suggest we open negotiations with the Papacy, so that we can come to some form of agreement on the holy land. If we continue to fight this war, not only will we be bankrupted, we will also lose so much more than we have already lost."

Upon hearing the word bankrupted, Vetranis immediately shivered in fear. He knew that he was emptying the Empire's coffers at a rapid rate in order to pay for this war effort. Hell, most of the weapons and armor his troops were equipped with came from Germany, and though they received a discount, the cost seemed to be a never ending pit of money.

Palladius wanted to counter this point, but he was already in a secret alliance with Berengar, having the objective of placing Alexandros on the throne. He knew full well what the Kaiser's plan was and allowed Quintus to convince his father to agree to a disastrous treaty.

Thus, he sat back and sighed, knowing that he would be damning the Empire for a few years in the hopes that a true leader could rise from the despair and lead them to their former glory. Upon noticing Palladius' silence, Quintus continued to convince his father to negotiate with the Catholic Forces.

"Father, heed my words. Further conflict will only prove to ruin the Empire. We must negotiate! Even if our Timurid allies wish to continue the fight!"

Vetranis was slightly concerned that the Sultan Salan would not agree to peace, and would continue to fight against the Crusader armies until his forces were completely exhausted. However, what Quintus said was true. They were already at the breaking point financially. If they continued this war, they would have to go into debt to their German Allies, and that was something that Vetranis would never do again.

Berengar was a scheming bastard, and Vetranis knew this all too well. The last time he went in debt to the Kaiser, the devious cunt had trapped him in debt, and made outrageous demands of him in return for cancelling a portion of it. It forced Vetranis to give up his daughter's hand in marriage to the polygamous scoundrel, not to mention land in Egypt.

He feared what demand the man would make when the Empire was incapable of paying off its debt this time around. If it was between going into debt with the Reich, or surrendering the Holy Land to the Catholics, then Vetranis would rather do the latter. After all, he could always get back the land the Crusaders took from him in a few years.

The Byzantine Emperor did not know what his German counterpart wanted from him, but whatever the Kaiser would demand in return for cancelling this debt, he knew in his heart it would be too much for him to agree to. Thus, he could only sigh in defeat and agree to his son's request for a peaceful solution to the conflict.

"Very well, I shall send word to the Pope, expressing my intent for peace. We will meet in neutral ground and thoroughly discuss an end to this war. We can't afford to go into debt to the Reich once more. Instead, we will suffer this loss, and slowly build back our military strength until we can reclaim the holy land from those catholic bastards!"

Quintus was pleased with this arrangement, and Palladius merely nodded his head in agreement. Internally, he knew that the peace accords would end in a disaster for the Byzantine Empire. The Pope was listening to whispers by Berengar's agents about a vengeful peace towards the east. Naturally, this idea was touted as a means of propaganda to show what happens to those who side with Germany.

By the time Vetransis officially surrendered, the Byzantine Empire would be in debt to the Papacy, their armies would be limited, and the crusaders would confiscate their lands south of Anatolia. This would cause destitution among the people, as many refugees fled the former boundaries of the Empire and into the enclave that was formed in the Balkans and Asia Minor.

Undoubtedly, Decentius and Vetransis would be held responsible for this abysmal treaty, and by the time the current Emperor passed away, there would be demands for someone other than Decentius to claim the throne. The source of this content is Freewebnovel.com.

When this happened, there would only be two candidates. One would be Quintus' womanizing drunkard of a little brother, which nobody supported. The other was the offspring of the beloved Princess Honoria, and her husband, who was a man renowned for leading Germany to new heights. It was a no brainer who would be selected, but just in case, Palladius, with the support of the Reich, would gather both his faction, and the hawks, to support Alexandros when the time came.

With Berengar's support, Decentius' reign as the Byzantine Emperor would be short-lived, and after a successful coup d'etat, Alexandros would be given the throne. Palladius could only admire the level of scheming Berengar had gone through to make this future a reality. After all, a debt trap would not compel Vetransis to name Alexandros his successor, especially now that he was growing paranoid about the prospect of being overthrown by the Kaiser.

The death of Hasan, and the inheritance of his kingdom by Berengar's son Ghazi, made Vetransis wary that the same thing could happen to him. After all, he had married off his only daughter to the Kaiser via a matrilineal marriage. At first Vetransis did not understand the reason why Berengar was so eager to give up his offspring with Honoria to their mother's dynasty. However, with the recent events in Iberia, he now understood Berengar's true intentions.

Naturally Berengar had calculated this Paranoia, and thus he did not attempt to negotiate via debt trap diplomacy like he had done in order to ensure his marriage to Honoria. Instead, he chose a more fiendish approach, one that even Vetransis in his Paranoia would not expect.

With this meeting adjourned, the Byzantine Emperor would soon meet with the Pope and unwittingly knock over the first domino that would eventually establish Alexandros as the future Emperor of the East. As for Quintus, he had played his part perfectly. All Berengar had to do now was wait a few years and reap the harvest of his schemes.

Chapter 759 Rethinking Cities

Berengar stood in his war room by his lonesome. He had been up all night, for the past three nights, working on this project sitting in front of him. On a large table sat a miniature replica of the city of Kufstein, including the subterranean level where the sewers currently existed.

Unlike the actual city of Kufstein, there were several major changes done to this replica. Most notably were his most recent improvements in power lines and street lights. Yet, there were other notable exceptions to this. Stop lights, stop signs, bicycle lanes, and bus stops were all added to the surface level of the city. While below the city, there were pipelines and storage facilities intended to allow the transfer and storage of bio-diesel so that they could be pumped into the public transit system Berengar had devised.

In the streets, double Decker busses roamed to their hearts' contents while transporting civilians from one end of the city to the other. Beside them were trucks carrying goods from the countryside to the cities. The miniature city of Kufstein was alive and prosperous as Berengar smiled at it.

Eventually the Kaiser shifted his gaze from the Trade District to the Palace District, where his sight fell in front of the Royal Palace where a small car based upon the Mercedes Benz 770 lie in the driveway. Surrounding it were precisely sculpted miniature figurines of Berengar and his family.

This miniature city was an example of the future of Kufstein. Berengar already designed everything in this replica to be used in the real world. He had been hard at work since his return from Africa, developing the technology that would be needed to advance Germany into the age of electricity and combustion engines. All he needed was to wait for it to be produced and implemented. In a few years, Kufstein, and many of Germany's major cities, would look like this, more or less.

As he was playing around with the figures, the door to the room opened to reveal the curvy figure of the Princess Henrietta. The girl had bags under her eyes, and her hair was a mess. It would appear she was up just as late as Berengar working her damndest to make sure the finances were in place to fund this city wide renovation. She smiled when she saw her big brother, before handing him the expense report while kissing him on the cheek.

"It's all done. The numbers have been crunched, the funds are in place. We will begin adding these plans of yours to the ongoing Grand Infrastructure Project immediately."

Berengar smiled and pet his sister's silky golden hair while hugging her tightly. He praised the girl for her hard work before kissing her on the forehead.

"That's my Henrietta. I knew I could count on you! You truly are the best!"

Henrietta wore a pretty smile on her face while blushing profusely as she received such praise from her precious big brother. If she had a tail, she would be wagging it at this moment. She was so caught up in her brother's embrace that she did not notice the replica of the city until this second. Berengar noticed her curious gaze and asked the question on his mind.

"You want to see it?"

Henrietta nodded her head obediently, causing Berengar to smile before leading her over to the replica.

"This is Kufstein, or more importantly, it is what Kufstein will look like in a few years! Is it not glorious?"

Henrietta carefully observed the city and everything in it. It was truly marvelous in her eyes. She was shocked to see how much thought Berengar had put into this. Even more so on how far their family's territory had come in a decade under her brother's reign. She could not help but comment on her astonishment.

"It's truly amazing. I can't believe that ten years ago, we were in a small farming town, and soon enough, this metropolis will be our hometown. So much has changed since you took power. You're now an emperor, and I'm an imperial princess. Sometimes it is mind-boggling just how far we have come."

After saying this, Henrietta's gaze shifted all the way to the Royal Palace, where she saw the miniatures that represented the family. She smiled when she saw her own figurine. After a while, she carefully counted the numbers before addressing her concern.

"Big brother, you're missing one!"

Berengar gazed upon the scene of his family standing outside the car and carefully observed the numbers, he had gone through painstaking lengths to accurately sculpt his entire family for this replica, and he knew for certain he had gotten all of his family members, thus after recounting he denied this accusation.

"No, I'm not. I think I would know if I forgot to sculpt a figure of one of my children!"

However, Henrietta had a coquettish expression on her face as she wrapped Berengar's hands around her belly. After doing so, she whispered something in his ear.

"You're missing this little one right here!"

Berengar chuckled as he kissed the girl on the forehead before hugging her.

"You're pregnant? Again? God damn, what is with you girls?"

Henrietta scoffed and feigned offense when she heard this.

"Well, maybe if you used protection, this wouldn't happen so often. Besides, this is only our second child together. I'm behind the others!"

Berengar shivered when he heard the word protection before rejecting the notion.

"The idea of wearing a condom made of goat intestines freaks me out. I'd rather just pull out and roll the dice!"

This response caused Henrietta to giggle as she held onto Berengar while making fun of him.

"Well, it appears the odds are not in your favor, my dear big brother..."

It was Berengar's turn to make fun of Henrietta as he bopped her nose with his finger.

"Hey, I'm your nephew, remember?"

Henrietta pouted while breaking away from Berengar's grasp when he said this and proceeded to walk towards the door. In that moment, Berengar thought he had pissed the girl off with that statement, and

immediately followed after her. Surprisingly, she turned around with a playful grin on her face and kissed him before expressing the following.

"I don't recognize that as canon... Now come, big brother, let's go take a bath before the others wake up!"

Berengar chuckled when he heard this and allowed himself to be dragged away by the wrist. He had said that same phrase himself more than once in his past life in response to certain major works that went in a direction he didn't like, but he never expected his sister to say it about their lineage.

He would soon enter the bath, where he and Henrietta stripped out of their lavish attire before relaxing in their tub, which was the size of a swimming pool. Henrietta sat in Berengar's lap, and allowed her brother to clean every inch of her body, before she responded in kind.

By the time they were finished enjoying themselves, the rest of the family awoke, and the duo were forced to cut their time together short. After all, Adela was bound to get jealous if she figured out the two of them had gotten together without her, and neither of them wanted to listen to her furious monologue.

With this planning, the cities of the German Empire would enter the next stage of evolution. Those that were not yet fully industrialized would instantly be kicked past the age of steam and enter the world of electricity. Berengar had a ten-year plan in mind. This plan was for the Reich to enter a level of Great War era technology throughout the borders of the fatherland. With the redesigning of the cities, he had achieved the first step on this decade long journey.

Chapter 760 I Will Make a Man Out of You

Berengar sat in his office with a stern expression on his face as he rested his chin on his folded hands. In front of him was his eldest child, Hans von Kufstein, who had a nervous expression on his face. Berengar had been meaning to talk to the boy for a while, following the stunt he pulled in his school. However, his schedule had been dreadfully busy, and because of that, he had waited well over a week to have this conversation.

Hans was squirming in his seat. The only thing that frightened him more than his mother when she was angry was his father. He was aware of why he was sitting here across from the world's most powerful tyrant and took a deep breath to calm himself before listening to his father's scolding.

"You know why you are here, don't you, Hans?"

The boy remained silent as he nodded his head in agreement, signalling his father to continue his lecture.

"You slapped your fiance across the face in front of an audience. Do you know what people are saying about that? The Kaiser's ward is living a life filled with abuse. The Prince of Germany is cruel towards women, et cetera et cetera et cetera. I have worked hard to build the prestige and dignity of my family, to the point where the von Kufstein name commands both fear and respect among people around the globe.

With your little display of violence, people are starting to speak ill of our family. Those with an agenda in their minds have used your actions as a way to slander our dynasty. I know that your mother has asked you to apologize to the girl. Have you done so already?"

Hans shook his head awkwardly as he responded truthfully to his father's interrogation.

"No, father, she doesn't want to see me..."

Berengar nodded his head in silence for several minutes before getting up from his seat. He stared out the windows for several seconds before responding to his son.

"Do you know why it is inappropriate to hit a woman?"

The prince kneaded his hands for several moments before responding to the question while unsure of the answer his father was looking for.

"Because there's no valid reason for doing?"

Berengar scoffed when he heard this before looking at the boy with disdain.

"Bullshit! Did your mother tell you that? Typical... Hans, there are plenty of reasons to hit a woman. You just don't fucking do it! Especially not in public. Why? Because they are weaker than we are. As one of my potential heirs, who lets be honest here is the most likely to succeed me when I finally retire. You need to mind your position and never use your power to bully those who are weaker than you.

Veronika disrespected you, in public, no less. Believe me when I say that I understand the urge to put a woman in her place when she does that. However, there are plenty of ways to discipline a bitch when she acts out. However, you do so in the comfort and safety of your own home. You do not lash out in public and strike her. It is simply disgraceful behavior.

Your mother has said that you need to apologize to Veronika. However, she is a woman, and is not thinking with her brain, but with her heart. So allow me to ask you a question. Do you honestly believe what you did was wrong, or are you simply remorseful that your actions caused distress to the girl?"

Hans thought clearly about what his father was asking him for a few moments before raising his head towards the man with a clear sense of understanding in his eyes.

"Though I may have gone too far in my actions, I believe the intent behind them was justified. I would suppose that I do not feel guilt for my actions, but remorse for the effect they had on Veronika."

Berengar nodded his head in approval, before walking over to the boy, and leaning on his desk as he instructed him further.

"You never apologize to a woman, Hans, at least not for your actions, and especially if you don't feel they were unwarranted. It is a sign of weakness, a sign of submission; and as the future King of Bohemia, and potentially the next Kaiser, you should never lower your head to a woman.

However, women are emotional creatures, and won't easily forgive you unless they get an apology, so the compromise is to divert the apology towards how they feel. After all, that is what they really care about. Your mother has ordered you to apologize to Veronika, and you shall.

You will go to her school tomorrow at lunchtime. Don't worry about being granted access. I'll take care of it. You will approach her in front of all her classmates, and be as kind as I know you can be, where you will apologize to Veronika for hurting her feelings and causing her emotional distress. I have no doubt she will forgive you, and all the other girls will see that you are a kind and caring boy who takes care of his fiancée.

That should dispel any nasty rumors that are floating about regarding our household and the treatment of my ward. Your mother has spoiled you too much. It is time I teach you how to be a man. Starting with how to properly apologize."

After hearing his father's lecture, Hans felt enlightened. The man's words really opened his eyes to the power dynamics behind relationships. He did not know that something as simple as an apology had such a profound effect on how people viewed him. He listened to his father's advice well before nodding his head and agreeing to his demands.

"Very well, father, I will do as you say!"

Berengar grinned when he heard this and patted the boy on the shoulder before parting some additional wisdom.

"Hans, you were born with the greatest gift of all. You have an exceptionally gifted mind and you are more intelligent than I, or your Mother could ever dream of becoming. However, you are still young and lacking in wisdom.

If you wish for your legacy to one day outshine mine, then you should do well to heed my advice and obey my commands. If you do so, I will make a man out of you. A man so great that history will remember you forever. Now run along, and make sure to apologize as I have instructed you to your little fiancée."

Hans smiled and nodded his head before departing from his father's study.

"Thanks for the advice, father!"

After saying this, the boy ran off to go enjoy himself for the rest of the day.

The next day, Hans did as he was instructed. At lunchtime, he departed from his school and rode on a carriage to the all girls' academy that Veronika attended. The gate guards did not even bat an eye as the prince walked through their entrance. When he noticed this, he knew his father had cleared the way for him.

After all, every boy dreamed of entering these pearly gates, but none were allowed entry. Hans would be the first boy to enter this school since its creation. As he walked down the halls, those girls who were not in the cafeteria whispered among themselves and giggled. They were shocked to see a boy enter the sacred halls of their school, but they all knew his identity and none dared to impede his progress.

Eventually, Hans found Veronika sitting in the cafeteria alongside several of her friends, who instantly gazed at him with astonishment. When Veronika saw their expressions, she turned around to see her little Fiancee staring at her with a warm expression. She pouted as she saw the boy who had shunned her so brutally in front of his classmates, and turned her head to the side, not wanting to look into his

eyes. When Hans saw this, he chuckled before handing a rose over Veronika that he had hid up his sleeve.

"Veronika, we need to talk..."

The girl refused to shift her gaze towards him and merely harrumphed coldly in an attempt to shoo him away. This chapter is updated by Freewebnovel.com.

"There's nothing for us to talk about, Hans..."

All eyes were on the two of them as they attempted to settle their dispute, with girls gossiping in the background. Ultimately, Hans sighed before forcing the rose into Veronika's hand. He took a deep breath before making his apology.

"Veronika, I'm sorry that I hurt your feelings. I know this doesn't mean much, but after what happened, I had some time to think, and I kicked Noemi to the curb. If it is between you and her, then I'll choose you every time. You know that, right?"

Veronika blushed as she heard this apology and lowered her head. The girls in the cafeteria were all whispering among themselves as they heard this. They had heard that the Prince had slapped her, but they did not know the reason behind it. They never would have guessed that it was because of a love triangle. It was almost as if they were watching a soap opera play out in front of them, and they all ate it up.

The Bohemian Princess did not even realize that Hans had failed to apologize for his actions, nor did he promise to never again lay a hand on her. He had watched his father enough to know how to manipulate a woman's heartstrings.

Naturally, with his intellect and his father's advice, Hans was able to formulate the proper apology. One that deflected from guilt and responsibility while spoonfeeding the girl exactly what she wanted to hear. It worked like a charm, because after several moments of silent embarrassment, Veronika hugged the boy and called him the same nickname that Noemi used to call him.

"Hansy!"

After hugging him, she pouted once more before pulling on his cheeks.

"You little brat, you put me through so much pain! You owe me!"

Hans endured the torment before asking what the girl wanted from him.

"Anything, just ask!"

The girl eventually let go of his cheeks, where she wore a sheepish expression while touching her index fingers together.

"Tea... Tea time, this Saturday, just the two of us!"

In response to this, the Prince chuckled before responding to the girl's demands with a wide grin on his face.

"Sure... Anything for you, Veronika!"

Immediately, the cafeteria erupted with roars, as the girls screamed in excitement. Though there were a few years between the royal couple, it was an endearing sight for many of the girls who could only dream of having such an adorable little fiance. Those who were among the nobility were already engaged to men much older than them, and when they saw Veronika and Hans together, they were naturally jealous.

In the end, this little apology of Hans' would spread far and wide across the city, putting an end to the nasty rumors of abuse. Veronika had forgotten all about her little dispute, and would maintain a friendly relationship with her fiance.

Though Linde had put an end to Hans's relationship with Noemi, the boy was undeterred from the prospect of hanging out with her. He vowed to find a way to be with Noemi simply out of spite towards his mother, and his fiancée, for forcing him to terminate the relationship.